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## Corzine will push funding for state bases

By JOSH BERNSTEIN

Burlington County Times

FORT DIX - With two years to go before the Pentagon decides which military installations to close, U.S. Sen. Jon Corzine said yesterday he would push hard to get money for projects at bases in New Jersey.

Corzine continued the decade-old theory by New Jersey's congressional delegation that the more money invested in a base, the less likely the Department of Defense is to close it.

"I think all of our institutions have a reason to be, and deserve strong support on any debate about national priorities," Corzine said yesterday following a meeting at Fort Dix.

The Democratic senator and several representatives of New Jersey's congressional delegation met with ranking officers from the bases for four hours to review the role each installation plays in war and homeland security.

The potential decisions of a new Base Realignment and Closure Commission in 2005 were not discussed overtly with the those officers, but Corzine said understanding the missions of installations here gave him the groundwork to defend their value to Congress.

The Pentagon has not determined the number of base closures. However, Corzine said he heard it could be 120, more than the number shut in 1989, 1991, 1993 and 1995 combined. Installations in New Jersey that could make the list are Fort Dix, McGuire Air Force Base, Lakehurst Naval Air Engineering Station, Picatinny Arsenal, Fort Monmouth and Earle Naval Weapons Station.

The senator would not say whether he felt any of those bases were vulnerable.

"There's an extraordinary argument for each of them on their own," said Corzine, who in 2001 voted to authorize the 2005 closure list.

"Increasingly, I feel we're in a very strong position as we go through this process."

Corzine said military bases in New Jersey contributed more than \$3.5 billion to the economy last year. McGuire contributed \$605 million and

Fort Dix \$375 million, officials said.

Since the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, Fort Dix has mobilized 20,000 troops for overseas or homeland-security duties, more than any Army base in nation, post Commander Col. Dave Lowry said. Active duty, reserve and National Guard personnel based at McGuire also flew missions over Iraq and Afghanistan.

Lowry said he informed Corzine of his wish for a new, \$27 million Military Operations in Urbanized Terrain project, a 27-building area where troops could train to fight in cities. He said Picatinny units could test weapons there.

"It was a great opportunity for all the installation commanders and the congressional delegations to sit down and talk about what they're doing now and what their mission is," Lowry said.

Jeff Sagnip Hollendonner, a spokesman for U.S. Rep. Jim Saxton, R-3rd of Mount Holly, attended the meeting and said Corzine asked good questions.

"It was very encouraging to see the senator taking such a proactive role in the bases' future," Hollendonner said. "He displayed a very keen awareness of the economic impact of the bases on the New Jersey economy."

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